

VZCZCXRO7328  
PP RUEHROV  
DE RUEHAM #0954/01 1131206  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 231206Z APR 09  
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4938  
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 000954

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ELA, NEA/PPD, IIP/GNEA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: JORDAN: MEDIA FURTHER REACT TO KING'S U.S. VISIT

¶1. SUMMARY: All major print outlets in Jordan Thursday led with coverage of King Abdullah's activities in Washington on Wednesday. Front-page coverage focused on the King's meetings with House Speaker Pelosi and the Friends of Jordan Caucus. Inside-page analyses cited local experts who perceive new and clear differences between the U.S. and Israel on the peace process. Op-ed commentaries stress the need to build a unified Arab position based on the Jordanian one. END SUMMARY.

¶2. All major Jordanian print outlets on Thursday led with extensive coverage of King Abdullah's activities in Washington on Wednesday. Along with large point headlines and photographs, front-page coverage focused on the King's meetings with the Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi and members of the Congressional Friends of Jordan Caucus. Reports relied heavily on the official account by the Jordan News Agency.

¶3. In the meeting with caucus members, the King reportedly emphasized that "Israel's security will only be achieved through peace, adding [that] Israel has to choose between the fortress mentality and integration in the region." Caucus co-chairman Adam Schiff "hailed Jordan's role in Middle East peace-making efforts." Mr. Schiff told the Jordan News Agency that "Jordan - U.S. ties are strong and the caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives has worked to strengthen these ties." Co-chairman Charles Boustany said, "The caucus was interested in assisting Jordan to address challenges facing the region."

¶4. Representative of several lengthy analyses in today's inside pages, Jordan Times reporter Mohammed Ghazal highlighted the President's remarks on the two-state solution and the Arab Peace Initiative. He quoted analyst Nasouh Majali as saying, "The U.S. policy is in the process of being formulated and Arabs should highlight their peace-loving stance to the international community and the U.S. administration in particular.... For the first time there are clear differences between the U.S. and Israel." Pollster Fares Breizat is also quoted, saying, "More work must be done on American public opinion to create some sort of balance between the Israeli and the Arab narratives." Sounding a rare discordant note, former Lower House speaker Abdul Latif Arabiyat expressed pessimism, saying, "Statements by Obama are meant to waste time and delay a solution to the conflict.... I do not expect anything to happen in the near future unless the U.S. stops protecting Israel and being its absolute supporter."

¶5. Editorial commentary for April 23:

-- "Signals From the King-Obama Meeting"

In today's edition of the independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad, political scientist Mohammad Al-Momani cautions, "The press statements... and the worldwide media coverage that resulted from this meeting signal the success of the summit meeting and its fulfillment of its basic goal, which is to convince the U.S. administration to continue to consider the Palestinian issue a priority and that handling it would greatly defuse the inherent crises in the Middle East.... Prior to the meeting, it appeared that President Barack Obama was taking steps that were acceptable to and appreciated by the Arabs vis-à-vis handling the Arab-Israeli

conflict.... Yet, after the meeting, this appeared not to be true and that the American President... is a 'political creature' seeking to maximize the interests of his own country and decrease the political costs that could ensue. He realizes the importance and vitality of the Palestinian issue for the Arab countries, and as such he will not give any moves on this issue without prices and political positions we believe his team is currently formulating. Here lies the difficulty of discussions with Obama to convince him that it is in 'self-interest' of the United States to handle this conflict, that by doing so, it is not being biased in favor of Arab wishes as much as it is for its own interests, and that the United States has much to gain and little to lose if it resolves this conflict."

-- "So That The Arab Message in Washington Does Not Get Lost"

Editor Nabil Ghishan in today's edition of the independent, opposition Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm demurs, "The American stand did not present anything new since George Mitchell's appointment as a presidential envoy to the region and his announcement that the two-state solution is an American national interest. This is a development in itself, but it needs action on the ground to support it. We as Arabs did not like the tone of statements made by the American President the day before yesterday. Yet, he could not move any further towards the Arab position, because he knows that there is a potential confrontation looming in the horizon with the Israeli Prime Minister who visits Washington early next month. That is why President Obama avoided a media speech that would anger Israel and the Zionist Lobby.... The stage is now completely set in the United States, and the stances of the White House have moved closer to Arab interests. What remains is a dire need to build a serious and effective Arab stand that supports the Jordanian move."

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-- "Wagers on Change"

Chief editor Taher Odwan in today's Al-Arab Al-Yawm asserts, "The reality of the matter is that the Palestinian issue has reached a serious stage where the game of dividing up people into optimists and pessimists is no longer useful and where there is no more waiting time as Judaization and settlement activities in Jerusalem and the West Bank blows away all hope of a solution. The Arab leaders need to have meetings amongst themselves after their own meetings with Obama in order to support their initiative in a manner that creates new climate of change in the balance of power between the Arabs and Israel. This is because at the end of the day, if there is no change on the Arab side, wagering on an effective and influential change on Obama's side become a mere game of luck."

-- "When the King Gets An American Commitment to Resolve the Conflict"

The main editorial in today's edition of the government-aligned Arabic daily Ad-Dustour opines, "The King's visit to Washington resulted in the launch of a new stage and put the negotiations back on the right track. This was confirmed when the Egyptian and Palestinian Presidents and the Israeli Prime Minister were invited to meet the American President to discuss the best ways to resolve the conflict and to save the region and the world from the threats of wars.... We can confirm with complete confidence that the King's meeting with President Obama is a historic meeting and a watershed in American politics and in the peace process, especially since the King got a commitment from the U.S. administration to pull its weight on resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of the two-state solution. It is confirmed that the King is the best to represent the nation."

-- "Exerting Leverage"

The main editorial in the elite, small-circulation English daily Jordan Times cogitates, "King Abdullah is the first foreign head of state to visit Washington during the Obama era. That alone shows the close and trusted ties between Jordan and the U.S. It is a strategic partnership that is important to continue, to nurture and sustain. Indeed, the remark by President Barack Obama at the two

leaders' joint press conference was indicative of the kind of influence Jordan can and should cultivate in Washington. Asked a question about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Obama said the parties couldn't continue talking indefinitely. The just and swift resolution of the conflict to our west is Jordan's highest foreign policy objective. For too long now has Israeli intransigence been allowed to slow down the bumpy journey to regional stability.... The U.S. is in the unique position that it alone holds sway over decision-making in Israel, whatever the illusions of Israel's new foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, who was quoted by a Russian newspaper as saying that Americans would agree to anything Israel suggested. On the contrary, Israel will agree to whatever Washington wants it to, if Washington has the political will to follow through on its demands...."

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